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The Corporation of The City of London March 5, 2007

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Fight Global Warming With Public Transit, Say Big City Mayors

A city bus can carry as many passengers as 50 cars and pollutes up to 18 times less, but not if it's out of service for lack of maintenance.

Unveiling their **National Transit Strategy** (pdf) today in Montreal, members of the Big City Mayors' Caucus (BCMC) of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) said, "Getting people out of their cars and onto public transit is the only way to reduce automobile emissions and end gridlock. But, our transit systems need \$2 billion a year just to stay in good repair and we need a national strategy with long-term funding to maintain and expand public transit."

The Mayors note Canadian transit riders pay a higher percentage of the total costs to build, maintain and operate transit than do riders in almost all other Western countries. Yet, meeting public transit's needs remains difficult. As such, the Caucus is calling for action to replace short-term funding with longer term, more predictable commitments from all orders of government.

The Canadian Urban Transit Association estimates new investments required just to stay afloat are almost as large as the entire sum currently invested in all transit capital projects.

"CUTA says transit systems across the country need \$20.7 billion for infrastructure from now to 2010," says Montreal Mayor Gérald Tremblay. "That's about \$4.2 billion a year to keep our systems running and expand them to accommodate more riders. Without predictable, long-term funding, municipalities cannot plan and finance long-term infrastructure projects like transit systems."

"Paying for public transit is a major issue for all municipalities and property tax alone is not sufficient to support this important service," says London Mayor Anne Marie DeCicco-Best. "Clearly, municipal governments need help to deliver the transit services on which our nation's economy, quality of life and environmental sustainability rely."

In addition to \$2 billion a year for capital expenses, the Mayors' proposal calls for integrated land use and transportation planning, incentives to encourage people to use transit, research to support greater transit use, and measures to ensure all governments are accountable.

